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280. s.

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600092506S







THE  
VALLEY OF THE REA.



By V.

AUTHOR OF "IX. POEMS," "THE QUEEN'S BALL,"

ETC. ETC.

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LONDON  
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.  
1851.

280. S. 270.



TO  
THE RIVER REA.\*

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I LOVED thee for thy river-beauty, Rea!

And many an hour comes back on me, when I

Gazed on thy motion, heard thee rushing by,

And felt, and dream'd, and wish'd, and hoped by thee.

The wish, the dream, were destined to depart,

And hopes shone out an hour, and were no more;

Again I would not bear the longing heart,

Which by thy devious bank, O Rea! I bore.

Another scene, another home, have sent

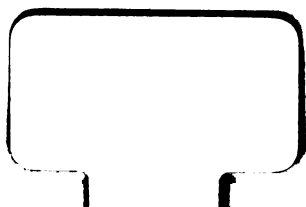
Life's heav'n upon my scarce believing view;

\* A little stream which rises in the Brown Clee-hills and falls into the Teme.





600092506S





Those happy two, supremest state!  
Husband and Wife, one name, one fate!  
Two are they, yet those two are one—  
And this the hand of God hath done.  
Their eyes delight to watch the scene  
    Assume its new, enchanting dyes;  
They are of those who feel within  
    And see around them Paradise.

But from the valley's other side, there flow  
The bell's repeated, solemn tones of woe;  
With measured pauses through the air they float,  
Still swinging slow, the one unalter'd note;  
Fade into gradual breathlessness, and then  
Wake the long echoes with the sound again.  
That voice proclaims Man's earthly course is run;  
'Tis the last farewell of the journey done:  
His bark is stranded on the furthest shore,  
And its furl'd sails enjoy the breeze no more.

Borne of *their* hands, who living loved him best,  
He quits the home his presence form'd and bless'd;  
They move with step all slow, all silent on,  
And the black garb looks mournful in the sun.  
One grieving form with head bent downward goes,  
And shuns the noonday light that round her glows;  
Whose beam replete with joy forbids to start  
The tear which might have eased her bursting heart.  
She gazes on the coffin's sable gloom,  
Or the dusk shadows of the open'd tomb,  
And seeks no hand nor eye to bring relief,  
Sunk in the comfortless neglect of grief.  
For there the face that once looked kindness lies,  
There senseless slumber those domestic eyes;  
There turns to clay the hand so fondly press'd;  
No love throbs warm in that unheaving breast—  
Past gladness with its ghost-like voice rebukes  
    The heart that breaks not such a loss beneath;  
Past wrong, if any, stings the breast that looks  
    Upon the unrepublishing face of Death.

Solemnly, slowly, to the grave they go,  
To lay their friend the sullen earth below;  
On the strained ear the rustling garments fall,  
And brief and heavy steps that bear the pall;  
And stifled sobbings which at moments start  
When grief is pressed more sharply on the heart.  
While still o'er their approach, discordant swell  
The heavier pealings of the fun'ral bell.

Bring flowers and strew before the Bride,  
Her first step over flow'rs should glide;  
Bring buds, whose breath to her may rise  
While passing o'er their countless dyes,  
To tell her each delicious minute  
Shall yield to her the perfume in it.  
No hue, however bright and gay,  
Can be too sparkling for to-day;  
No bloom or breath can be so sweet  
But finds a hope to answer it.

The fields to village hands supply  
The gay profusion of their flow'rs;  
And joyous bands all yesterday,  
Were gath'ring them from banks and bow'rs.  
The garden's art has all been moved  
To deck her with the bloom she loved;  
And all have snatched a flow'r, to wear  
The thing that shows most fresh and fair—  
So best to hail the day that brings  
Life's choicest gifts upon its wings.

Bring flowers and lay them on the bier;  
They ever deck that pageant drear;  
The hues they waste, the scents they cast,  
Paint forth the life whose hours are pass'd;  
And serve to rev'rence with their bloom,  
The dark dishonour of the tomb.  
None here except the dead may wear  
The thing that's costly, bright, or fair;

For 'tis of calmness and of peace they speak,  
And, oh—save his—how sad is every cheek !

Lay some upon that frozen breast—

How cold, how motionless they rest !

Not e'en the slender hare-bell moves, save where  
Some loosen'd petal trembles in the air.

'Tis Love's fond tribute, and its last,

That thus upon the dead is cast—

Those flow'rs her hand while morn was grey,

Took from their dewy tufts away,

Her wet eye sought the fairest, sweetest,

To deck her own beloved one meetest,—

And all she fondly spared erewhile,

And tended for its future smile,

She pluck'd that morn to bloom and fade

Upon the bier where he lay dead.

And as she broke each yielding stem,

The thoughts wherewith she gather'd them

Conjoined themselves with ev'ry flow'r

Whose odour reach'd her in that hour.

And whatsoever time or spot  
Shall bring again their scent and bloom,  
Her soul will tremble with the thought,  
    Unveil'd anew, of that day's tomb.  
E'en now upon the breeze's wing,  
Their sweetness smites her like a sting;  
Ah! tokens dark and objects drear,  
Were proper emblems now for her !

The hearth's first fire in yonder home is lit;  
    The social ray streams out upon the night;  
And marks how there, beneath the household  
    light,  
Those who first say, Our home ! are watching it.  
    What happy eyes behold that genial blaze,  
    What pleasant feelings roam to future days,  
Which still within a home of love shall flow,  
    Shared, lighted, bless'd by that beloved one,  
    Chose out from all the eye e'er look'd upon,  
Who for the first time shares, lights, blesses now.



But dim and low the widow's untrimmed fire,  
Where for the first time she now sits alone;  
She marks, but moves not, while the flames expire,  
'Tis like her heart's hope which has blazed and  
gone.

She thinks upon the tomb of silent earth,  
Which coldly the night wind is sweeping o'er;  
And thither yearns her spirit from the hearth,  
Where he is not, and never shall be more.

Ah me! 'tis bitter, so to sit and weep,  
The vigil of distress and love to keep;  
To pass from life's first social hours of bliss,  
To the deep solitude of grief like this.  
Bitter for those who stay behind the grave,  
Alone, divided, and dismay'd with grief;  
And see the light extinguish'd there, which gave  
Life's ease its sparkle, and life's pain, relief.  
The heart would fain expand as once it did;  
The eye would fain read that which now is hid,

The words of hoarded thoughts would pour their  
store,

To him who listens and replies no more;—

Toward that happy time, the heart bereft,

Yearns like an exile to the land he left.

But to that land no bark shall bear thee more,

Clouds shut thy longing eyes from that dear shore;

On, on alone, o'er life's tempestuous wave,

Thy only haven, widow, is the grave.

Ah, welcome, haven ! in thy secret place

Thou hast concealed, O Grave, the husband's face :

And, with thy shadows when the eye is grown

• Familiar, it again shall see its own.

Thine is his life, and thou hast laid it by,

With precious things while earthly time shall  
last;

Until thou yield thy treasures to the sky,

And this long present grief be with the past.

That hope denied, where is the power that may

Keep undissolved the burning, breaking heart ?

Grief were a stronger god than human clay  
If nought immortal in its pains had part.  
But man from forth his darkest griefs can raise  
A spirit, prophesying happier days ;  
With all his strength aid hope to conquer pain,  
And say " I shall possess mine own again."  
E'en now, methinks I see the ashes stir  
While dawns the Last Day on the sepulchre.  
A power unknown obscurely ranges through  
The dust that bore a human shape and hue ;  
While from mid heav'n the trumpet rolls its wave  
Around the bursting precincts of the grave.  
Slow from the mouldered heap there grows a form,  
Like morn's faint twilight conqu'ring in the storm ;  
Limb comes to limb, and bone from atom-heaps  
To shape, and strength, and place, mysterious creeps ;  
The wither'd flesh returns from dark decay,  
Fruit of the seed in earth's cold breast that lay ;  
The eye its glorious form again has found,  
The ear is fashioned for the voice of sound ;

The smiling lip is there, but smiles not yet,  
The hand is moulded, and the limbs are set.  
Earth reels and trembles to her base, beneath  
Th' approaching trumpet's dread continuous breath,  
Mountains dissolve, and oceans pass away  
In chaos, whence erewhile they sprang to-day ;  
Time ceases at its Maker's high command,  
Strange spheres and other natures seem at hand—  
But still there grows within the grave's rent span,  
Amid a dying world, the birth of man.  
That form is perfect now, but motionless ;  
It stands a statue yet ; but see where press  
Through swelling veins the tides of crimson glow,  
Warmth, strength, and beauty, kindling as they flow !  
He moves ! there's being now within that breast,  
He wakes ! that trumpet-blast hath burst his rest ;  
A smile comes forth, the soul's dawn o'er the night,  
And life looks sudden from the eyes in light.

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